

the church in any age. The Bible is not a book for one age or nation, but for all peoples and all times. It is the only standard to which any man or any party can appeal in matters of faith or in questions concerning doctrines and ordinances and modes of worship. Its decisions must be final, and evidently a mere change of human custom or preference is not sufficient to discredit any part of it. Truth is never obsolete, it has a freshness and vigor that is perennial. Tho the church may come into the possession of new truths as the years go by and tho the Master may have kept the good wine until now, yet the new truths can only add to but never supplant the old and the better wine is still supplied to us in the same old bottles. In giving prominence to the distinctive doctrines of the church, particularly in our teaching of baptism, feet washing and the Lord's Supper, great care should be exercised in giving to each ordinance its true place and meaning in the gospel economy. These are not meaningless rites imposed upon the church as tests of obedience. Each one has a deep spiritual significance and in our teaching we should labor to make their spiritual import readily apparent and the more so because a deep-seated prejudice is to be combatted and the minds of many people to be disabused of a pre conceived notion that these ordinances are only empty forms. They are forms but they are far from empty forms. Every ordinance is a handle by which we can better grasp and hold some spiritual truth. Our spiritual perceptions are dim and our very imperfections demand that we have some tangible, sensible object upon which we can fasten and by which God can lead us out to a fuller realization of the high things which he would reveal. Ordinances are avenues thru which the truth can find readier access to the soul. In a word each ordinance is but a means to an end—a round in the ladder by which we climb to loftier spiritual heights. Each ordinance of the Lord's house has power, by the law of association, to awaken in us a lively conception of the things—the spiritual things to which they stand related and thus serve an important purpose in the worship of God. If we were more spiritual we could perhaps hold heavenly truths without earthly handles, but God saw that we needed every help that could be furnished to quicken our drowsy, spiritual powers and in kindness he gave us ordinances rich with spiritual meaning. It is possible to unduly exalt an ordinance and to look to it for the virtue and power and pardoning grace which belong to God. Let us clearly teach that each ordinance has an object, an end beyond itself and that we practice these things, first because God in his word has commanded us to do so and also because

we would secure the spiritual good which it is the province of these ordinances to bring to us. I believe, brethren, that it is our duty to set forth repeatedly and in the clearest light, the significance of the ordinances which we practice, not only that our own people may derive a greater profit from their participation in them, but that thru such teaching the prejudice which undoubtedly exists against these ordinances outside the church may be overcome. The masses of the people read the Bible carelessly or not at all. They are familiar with the fundamental principles of the Christian faith, but in ignorance of many of the no less positive, even if smaller requirements of the word. I should be glad to see the church put forth greater effort than it has ever done before to place these neglected truths prominently before the people. Tracts and books should be circulated setting forth Brethren doctrine and at appropriate times and frequent intervals sermons should be preached not only to define our faith but to show it to be apostolic and especially to call attention to the spiritual significance of the ordinances we practice. If it be urged that the policy for which I am contending is already being generally pursued, I can only say that my own observation leads me to believe that the contrary is true. The publication thru the EVANGELIST of that admirable series of articles on the Lord's Supper was a step in the right direction and cannot fail to accomplish good. A few tracts treating of the distinctive features of our faith have been issued and should be given wide circulation, but many of our pastors do not teach the doctrine of the church from their pulpits except incidentally, and articles in the paper however able cannot make up for such neglect. The paper finds its way for the greater part, only into the homes of our own members, the public sermon may reach thousands who would learn of our doctrine in no other way.

There are two objections which possibly might be raised against this program which I have proposed. It might be urged, in the first place that a general and systematic agitation of the subject of church doctrine would plunge us once more into the troubled waters of Christian polemics and that the denominational prejudices and rivalries which have been growing less and less bitter all the years and which now seem happily on the point of disappearing altogether, would be revived again, and secondly that attention to forms and insistence upon externals robs the church of spirituality. This last objection tho often seriously made is evidently without any force whatever when used against the scriptural use of the forms which Jesus Christ himself established in his church. The right observance of the ordinances

promotes spirituality. The first objection contains some truth. The aggressive teaching of the doctrines of the church—I mean its peculiar, distinctive doctrines—will provoke opposition from some quarters. This is to be regretted. There should be peace among Christ's friends and we should only unsheathe our swords for a united attack upon satan and his works, but loyalty to what we conceive to be God's will must still prompt us to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

MAKING SALVATION IMPOSSIBLE

C. H. WETHERBE

It is fearfully true that it is within a sinner's power to make his own salvation impossible. We may talk fervently about the everlasting and abundant mercy of God as much as we please, yet it remains sadly true that, in spite of that mercy, sinners are resolutely setting themselves against the only plan of salvation which God has ever made or can make, and they can keep on doing so until they have no power nor disposition to accept salvation. Rev. Dr. Daniel Steele says: "Rev Abraham D. Merrill relates that he was awakened once by a messenger from a hotel in Lowell, requesting his presence at the bed of a dying man, who assured him on his arrival that he had not sent for him and that he did not wish his attendance, that he was sure that he was going to hell, and that in a revival meeting in which Mr. Merrill exhorted sinners to repent he was deeply moved by the Spirit whose pleadings he resisted and that since that hour the Spirit had totally abandoned him and he realized that his doom was sealed. The faithful pastor thinking that satan was fastening a lie upon him, quoted several scriptural promises in order to break the spell of despair and to awaken hope but to no avail. He then proposed prayer. The dying man replied, 'I do not want your prayers, and if you try to pray you cannot.' The preacher dropped upon his knees, but the Spirit sealed his lips; he could not utter a word. The sick man with a laugh exclaimed, 'I told you so.' The man of God took his hat and silently withdrew from a place that seemed to him the gate of hell." This man by his willful rejection of the special persuasions of the Holy Spirit, made his salvation impossible, and there are others who are now doing the same thing. Sinner, are you driving the Spirit from you? God's mercy will avail you nothing if you will persist in misusing the Holy Spirit.

The happiness of love is in action; its test is what one is willing to do for others.—Gen. Lew Wallace.

Trouble always follows when we put our own interests above God's.